

THE beestes passen by the
erthes byful diverse figures.
for som of hem han hir bod-
ies straught and crepen in
the dust, and drawn after
hem a tras or a foruh ycon-
tinued; that is to seyn, as nadres or snakes.
And other beestes, by the wandringe light-
nesse of hir wings, beten the windes, and
over swimmen the spaces of the longe eyr
bymoist fleeing. And other beestes glad-
en hemself to diggen hir tras or hir step-
pes in the erthe with hir goings or with hir
feet, & to goon either by the grene felde,
or elles to walken under the wodes. And
albeit so that thou seest that they alle dis-
corden by diverse formes, algates hir faces,
enclined, bevieth hirdulle wittes. Only the
linage of man heveth heyste his heye hev-
ed, and stondest light with his upright
body, and biholdeth the erthes under him.
And, but yif thou, erthely man, wexest
yvel out of thy wit, this figure amonesteth
thee, that axest the hevne with thy righte
visage, and hast areysed thy forcheved, to
beren up abeigh thy corage; so that thy
thoght ne benat yhevied ne put lowe under
fote, sin that thy body is so heye areysed.

THEREFOR thanne,
as I have shewed a
litel herbiform, that
althing that is ywist
his nat known by
his nature propre,
but by the nature of
hem that compre-
henden it, lat us loke
now, in as moche as
it is leveful to us, as who seith, lat us loke
now as we mowen, which that the estat is
of the devyne substance; so that we mow-
en eek known what his science is. The
commune jugement of alle creatures re-
sonables thanne is this: that God is eterne.
Lat us considere thanne what is eternitee;
for certes that shal shewen us togidere the
devyne nature and the devyne science.

ETERNITEE, thanne, is parfit pos-
sessioun & altogidere of lyf inter-
minable; and that sheweth more
cleerly by the comparisoun or the colla-
cioun of temporel thinges. for al thing
that liveth in tyme it is present, and pro-
cedeth fro preterits into futures, that is
to seyn, fro tyme passed into tyme com-
inge; ne ther nis nothing establisshed in
tyme that may embracen togider al the
space of his lyf. for certes, yit ne hath it

taken the tyme of tomorwe, and it hath
lost the tyme of yisterday. And certes, in
the lyf of this day, ye ne liven no more, but
right as in the moevable & transitorie mo-
ment. Thanne thilke thing that suffreth
temporel condicioun, althogh that it never
bigan to be, ne thogh it never ese for to
be, as Aristotle demed of the world, and
althogh that the lyf of it bestreched with
infinite of tyme, yit algates nis no swich
thing that men mighten trowen by right
that it is eterne. for althogh that it com-
prende and embrace the space of lyf in-
finit, yit algates ne embraceth it nat the
space of the lyf altogider; for it ne hath
nat the futures that ne ben nat yit, ne it ne
hath no longer the preterits that ben ydoon
or ypassed. But thilke thing thanne, that
hath & comprehendeth togider al the plu-
tee of the lyf interminable, to whom ther
faileth naught of the future, and to whom
ther nis naught of the preterit escaped nor
ypassed, thilke same is ywitnessed and
yproeved by right to be eterne. And it bi-
hoveth by necessitee that thilke thing be
alwey present to himself, and com-
potent; as who seith, alwey present to himself, &
so mighty that al be right at his plesance;
& that he have al present the infinite of the
moevable tyme. Wherefor som men trowen
wrongfully that, whan they heren that it
semede to Plato that this world ne hadde
never beginninge of tyme, ne that it never
shal han failinge, they wenen in this maner
that this world be makid coeteme with his
maker; as who seith, they wene that this
world and God ben makid togider eterne,
and that is a wrongful weninge. for other
thing is it to ben ylad by lyf interminable,
as Plato graunted to the world, and other
thing is it to embrace togider al the present
of the lyf interminable, the whiche thing
it is cleer and manifest that it is propre to
the devyne thoght.

NE it ne sholde nat semen to us, that
God is elder thanne thinges that ben
ymakid by quantitee of tyme, but
rather by the propretee of his simple na-
ture. for this ilke infinit moevinge of tem-
porel thinges folweth this presentarie es-
tat of lyf unmoevable; and so as it ne may
nat countrefeten it ne feynen it ne be ex-
cuse to it for the inmoevablete, that is
to seyn, that is in the eternitee of God, it
faileth and falleth into moevinge fro the
simplicitee of the presence of God, and
disencreseth into the infinit quantitee of
future and of preterit; and so as it ne may
nat han togider al the plente of the lyf, al-
gates yit, foras moche as it ne ceseth never
for to ben in som maner, it semeth som-
to us, that it folweth & resemblith thilke
thing that it ne may nat atayne to ne fulfil-
len, and bindeth itself to som maner pre-

sence of this litel and swifte moment: the
whiche presence of this litel & swifte mo-
ment, for that it bereth a maner image or
ywnesse of the aydwellinge presence of
God, it graunteth to, swiche maner thing-
es as it bitydeth to, that it semeth hem as
these thinges han yben, and ben.

AND, for that the presence of swich
litel moment ne may nat dwelle,
therfor it ravished and took the
infinit wey of tyme, that is to seyn, by
successioun; and by this maner is it y-
doon, for that it sholde continue the lyf
in goinge, of the whiche lyf it ne mighte
nat embrace the plente in dwellinge. And
forthy, yif we wollen putten worthynames
to thinges, and folwen Plato, lat us seye
thanne soothly, that God is eterne, & the
world is perpetuel. Thanne, sin that every
jugement knoweth and comprehendeth
by his owne nature thinges that ben sub-
ject unto him, ther is soothly to God, al-
weys, an eterne and presentarie estat; and
the science of him, that overpasseth al
temporel moevement, dwelleth in the sim-
plicitee of his presence, and embraceth
and considereth alle the infinit spaces of
tymes, preterits and futures, and loketh,
in his simple knowinge, alle thinges of
preterit right as they weren ydoon pre-
sently right now. Yif thou wolt thanne
thenken & avyse the prescience, by which
it knoweth alle thinges, thou ne shal nat
demen it as prescience of thinges to com-
en, but thou shalt demen it more right-
fully that it is science of presence or of
instaunce, that never ne faileth. for which
it is nat ycleped Providence, but it sholde
rather ben cleped Purviaunce, that is es-
tablisshed ful fer fro right lowe thinges,
& biholdeth from afer alle thinges, right
as it were fro the heye heighte of thinges.
Why axestow thanne, or why desputest-
ow thanne, that thilke thinges ben doon
by necessitee whiche that ben yseyn and
known by the devyne sighte, sin that,
forsothe, men ne maken nat thilke thinges
necessarie which that they seen ben ydoon
in hir sighte? for addeth thy biholdinge
any necessitee to thilke thinges that thou
biholdest presente? Nay, quod I.

CERTES, thanne, if men mighte
maken any digne comparisoun or
collacioun of the presence devyne
and of the presence of mankinde, right so
as ye seen some thinges in this temporel
present, right so seeth God alle thinges
by his eterne present. Wherefore this de-
vyne prescience ne chaungeth nat the na-
ture ne the propretee of thinges, but bi-
holdeth swiche thinges present to him-
ward as they shullen bityde to yowward
in tyme to comen. Ne it confoundeth nat

the jugement of thinges; but by o sighte
of his thought, he knoweth the thinges
to comen, as wel necessarie as nat neces-
sarie. Right so as whan ye seen togider a
man walken on the erthe and the sonne
arysen in the hevne, albeit so that ye seen
and biholden that oon and that other to-
gider, yit natheles ye demen and discernen
that that oon is voluntarie and that other
necessarie. Right so thanne the devyne
lookinge, biholdinge alle thinges under
him, ne troubleth nat the qualitee of thing-
es that ben certainly present to himward;
but, as to the condicioun of tyme, forsothe,
they ben future, for which it folweth, that
this nis noon opinioun, but rather a stede-
fast knowinge, ystrengthened by sooth-
nesse, that, whanne that God knoweth any
thing to be, he ne unwot nat that thilke
thing wanteth necessitee to be; this is to
seyn, that, whan that God knoweth any
thing to bityde, he wot wel that it ne hath
no necessitee to bityde.

AND yif thou seyst heer, that thilke
thing that God seeth to bityde, it
nemaynat unbityde (as who seith,
it mot bityde), and thilke thing that ne
may nat unbityde it mot bityde by neces-
sitee, and that thou streyne me by this
name of necessitee: certes, I wol wel con-
fessen and biknowe a thing of ful sad
trouthe, but unneth shal ther any wight
mowe seen it or come therto, but yif that
he be biholder of the devyne thoght. for I
wol answeren thee thus: that thilke thing
that is future, whan it is referred to the
devyne knowinge, thanne is it necessarie;
but certes, whan it is understonden in his
owne kinde, men seen it is outrely free, &
absolut fro alle necessitee.

FOR certes, ther ben two maneres
of necessitee. That oon necessitee
is simple, as thus: that it bihoveth
by necessitee, that alle men be mortal or
deedly. Another necessitee is conditionel,
as thus: yif thou wost that a man walketh,
it bihoveth by necessitee that he walke.
Thilke thing thanne that any wight hath
yknowe to be, it ne may ben non other
weyes thanne he knoweth it to be. But
this condicioun ne draweth nat with hir
thilke necessitee simple. for certes, this
necessitee conditionel, the propre nature
of it ne maketh it nat, but the adjeccioun
of the condicioun maketh it. for no ne-
cessitee ne constreyneth a man to gon,
that goth by his propre wil; albeit so that,
whan he goth, that it is necessarie that he
goth. Right on this same maner thanne,
yif that the purviaunce of God seeth any
thing present, than mot thilke thing ben
by necessitee, althogh that it ne have no
necessitee of his owne nature. But certes,
the futures that bityden by freedom of